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A calm inquiry into all the
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OF THE
FACTORY BILL,
EXHIBITING THE
NATURE, TENDENCY, AND OBJECT OF THE
NEW PRINCIPLES
BY WHICH
THE DISSENTING BODIES
STAND OPPOSED THERETO.

BY CHARLES LLOYD,
BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

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THE ONTARIO INSTITUTE
FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

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A CALM INQUIRY,

&c.

I.

THE simultaneous and energetic action, so general and so extended, awakened, throughout the respectable and miscellaneous Body voluntarily dissenting from the Church, by the Educational Clauses in the Factory Bill, calls for a serious, calm, and impartial inquiry.

The communities forming this Body cannot but be sensibly touched; their action is the proof of this; and the gist of our inquiry should be, are they justly excited to alarm, lest by this measure their religious liberty or their peculiar interests will be endangered? or, if on the result it should turn out that their leaders have groundlessly, on such pretexts, excited this great outcry, is there now discovered something deeper in the principles of Dissent, which in such a movement, should excite alarm elsewhere?

Hitherto, the united voice of the country, taught by past experience, has declared,—hitherto, the extensive and deservedly praiseworthy exertions of every body of Dissenters has practically exhibited, their universal and settled conviction of the truth, that education, to be either sound or beneficial, must be religious.

A change has by an electric shock, universally occurred in these sentiments, and we are told that it is a violation of religious liberty for a state to provide a religious education to the poor.

At a late meeting of Dissenters of various denominations in the metropolis, whose resolutions run in harmony with all those which have yet publicly appeared, it was "Resolved, that to require by law the education of children in the Christian or *any other religion* is a violation of the great and all-important principle of religious liberty."

This is exactly that fair and candid mode of testing the question now at issue which an opponent would desire. It neither embroils the question with objection to any peculiar teaching of the Christian religion, nor does it partially confine its scope, to a preference for any religious system adopted by man; it puts matters on that beautiful level of equality, which can be chargeable with no intolerance by any member of the human race on the face of the globe.

Happily for the non-cosmopolites of this nation, they can claim a country as their own; that country is England, and that country has already, ages past, professed, by its own choice, its faith in the Christian religion: and to this, as a profession, to the present day it publicly adheres. Accordingly, the Head of the nation, by authority of the national sanction, punishes any person who shall dishonour God by publicly denying Him, or Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.

We therefore at once see, how much is involved in the predominance and enforcement of such new principles. The issue is all-important to the kingdom, and involves nothing less, in the extent and latitude to which the whole Dissenting Body are now carrying them, than the unchristianizing of the land. If there is any thing more than a name in being a Christian country, if the inheritance is an advantage which we would wish to leave to our children, we must oppose this current, and prevent such principles from gaining a universal sanction; and the more so because it is declared by combined meetings of these Bodies,* "That it is the imperative duty of every friend of civil and religious liberty to urge on the present movement, for the purpose of *confirming and enlarging* to the latest generation the rights and privileges of British citizens;" *i. e.* to have freedom from any national acknowledgment of Christianity, as well as choice, individually, to oppose it. The following is a resolution of the Dissenters in Southwark, passed since the amended Clauses to the Bill had been published:—

"That no modification of the Educational Clauses in the Factory Bill can render them worthy of adoption; their total rejection ought to be sought by every constitutional means; and that it is the imperative duty of every friend of civil and religious liberty to resist to the utmost this retrograde movement in legislation, if they desire to see the sacred rights and privileges of the British People transmitted, *not merely unimpaired, but complete and enlarged*, to the latest generation."

The Eclectic Review just published, the organ of the leading bodies in this movement, makes this exciting appeal:

* Resolution of a meeting at Liverpool of various religious bodies of Protestant Dissenters, which has been generally adopted at the meetings throughout the country.

“Shall we take advantage of our position, to enlighten the public mind, to raise an impregnable barrier of *principle* to guard our liberty?”

This *confirming* and *enlarging*, this *erection* of “impregnable barriers,” tells us of the establishment of something new; and this novelty is nothing less (as we shall see) than the principle of the non-recognition, nationally, of the Christian religion.

In few words, the nation accepts the Christian religion as a gift and revelation sent from God. It does not adopt it on any speculative opinion that it is best; for its adoption, if resting on such ground, would be a tyranny. Sceptics have endeavoured to persuade us out of our religion; a necessity on their part, because we still retained it; and thank God, their attempts have failed!

The duty of providing Christian instruction to the children of the land, is one incumbent both individually and nationally, by virtue of this trust from God. The Church is the depository and instrument (and no Christian Dissenter, whatever credentials he may consider characteristic of that body, will deny this position) for keeping and promulgating this truth; and she has ever performed this duty. Individuals, or the nation at large, have provided for her suitable means for fulfilling her work, according as each have been impressed with the obligation and necessity of so doing; and in olden times the voluntary system was acted upon by our forefathers upon a grand and national scale.

In later days, owing to the corruptions of men, the Church needed to shake herself free from errors by which she was disfigured, and in doing so she passed through much trial; difference of opinion on non-essentials disunited many from her communion. These, and others, in recent times, warmed with an overwhelming zeal for christianizing the desolate portions of the land, and who, feeling themselves too powerfully oppressed by contact with an ungenial tepidity, and finding a want of elasticity of development in her constitution, as well as impediments in bringing their conquests to her shrine, have sought, by getting without the constraint of her pale, to do that duty which the Church, withheld partly by her own indolence, partly by overpowering circumstances, ought in accordance with her institution wholly to have done.

Towards millions of individuals the duty of Christian instruction remains undischarged. The obligation, which towards God still always continued equally binding, has been providentially brought home to the conscience of the nation, startled by apprehension of danger from so awful a neglect;

and thus the demand comes powerfully augmented by such an unwonted appeal. But whilst preparing to answer this call of duty, it is declared,—yes, by those who, in their own zeal for this duty alone, estranged themselves from her full communion,—by those who have been actively and zealously engaged, each under a banner of his own, in the labour of Christian instruction,—that because *they* have taken upon themselves this office, the nation shall neither at any subsequent period provide means, nor shall the Church move a hand in the pitiable field of ignorance which threatens the safety of all, unless every arrangement shall exactly conform to the prescription of the seceders.

This is their simple unvarnished claim. The field of irreligion they claim so exclusively as their own, that the nation shall have no right to see to it. Were Education a pastime for the employment of superabundant ardour and energy, the claim asserted to the Factory preserve might merit attention; but it concerns the souls of men;—the urgency cannot wait.

Such being a few of the reflections suggested by those sweeping objections, to any plan of national Education, “which shall not exclusively employ the two great educational institutions which the philanthropy of the country has originated,” we will now pass at once to examine very briefly the provisions of the Bill; and then having noted what it does not do, we will endeavour to give an impartial attention to the objections raised against the measure, fairly estimating whether they have been adequately met by the proposed amendments of Sir James Graham. These objections, we shall no doubt find, reach either to the measure in question, or oppose every plan of National Education. Having seriously and impartially examined the principles upon which these latter objections rest, and having ascertained how far, if acted upon, they are compatible with the constitution of a civilized or christian community, we will if they are new and aggressive, honestly give them their meed of our recognition.

II.

The Features of the BILL are these :—

1. IT applies only to children upwards of eight years, and under 13 years of age, employed in any factory for the manufacture of cotton, wool, hair, silk, flax, tow, hemp, or jute, in any mode or combination.
2. It directs that neither the mill-owner deriving gain by the hands of such children, nor the parents or person having any direct benefit from

their wages, shall advantage themselves by their tender bodies, without taking care that their minds are instructed and nurtured.

3. Penalties are imposed, fixed only at an amount that they may adequately protect the children in their enjoyment of the exemptions and advantages by the Bill provided for them. It is the necessity for such penalties, the humiliating necessity which the case presents, which can alone form the matter of regret to the imposition of these penalties. The penalties themselves, if necessary, can shock no humane mind.

4. Provisions are made for erecting, managing and sanctioning schools for the children. Funds for their erection are to be provided; in respect of one third of their cost by public subscription, one-third by grant under Committee of Privy Council, and one-third by local taxation; or one-half public subscription, and one-half by grant under Committee of Privy Council. These schools are to be maintained by payments from children not exceeding 3*d.* weekly, and the deficiency made up by contribution from poor-rate. Their management is entrusted to seven Trustees; one to be the officiating minister of the district, selected, in case there is more than one, by the Bishop; a second, the nominee of such minister; a third, the person elected by subscribers of 10*l.* or of 1*l.* for two successive years; and the four others to be persons standing assessed amongst the ratepayers ranking the third of the highest in amount on the list of assessments, donors of 20*l.* and upwards, or subscribers of 2*l.* for two successive years, who shall be elected to that office by rate-payers assessed at 10*l.* or upwards. The duties of the Trustees are to determine the school hours, the school fees, the school employments, the books and apparatus for school use, the holidays, the appointment, suspension or dismissal of the master or his assistants, their remuneration, and every question relative to the discipline and management of the school; and when three Trustees concur, the dismissal of any child for misconduct. The appointments of the master not to be valid unless approved by the Bishop of the diocese.

5. Schools already endowed, or to be subsequently built, may, by the consent of all interested parties, if approved of by the Committee of Privy Council, be placed under the same regulations.

6. Any school which shall be open for the Inspector of Factories, to visit and examine into the discipline and management thereof, and the state of the school and the scholars therein, (but not in any such inquiry further to interfere with the management thereof), are rendered available for the purposes of the Act. But it is provided that if the Inspector shall be of opinion that the master is unfit to teach children, or that the school-room or school-building is in a state improper for the reception of children, or that the school is in some essential particular defective, or that provision is not made in a school in which any Protestant child attends for the daily instruction of such child from the authorized version of the Holy Scriptures, he shall report the same to the Committee of Privy Council, who, after examination of all parties, may declare that the master is unfit, or that the school is improper or defective, and within a fortnight from the receipt of such order, and so soon as some other school, situated within two miles of the factory, shall be declared eligible, no certificate from such master or school will be available for the factory children.

The nature of these provisions is to make it necessary, that the factory owner shall provide a school for the children in his employ, in case there shall be none such within two miles of his factory. And to enable him to do so, he need only manage to raise (by subscription) one-

third of the cost ; the rest the Treasury and the locality provide in thirds each.

7. The next object of the Bill is, that the children shall be religiously educated. The master is required "to teach the Holy Scriptures in the authorized version to such children as shall be of proper age to learn the same, and shall teach from no other book of religion," except that to all such children whose parents shall have made no objection to their being present at such instruction, the master shall give instruction in such mode as shall be determined by the clerical Trustee, and with the use of such books as shall be selected by the Archbishop of both the Provinces ; and except that the clerical Trustee, or whom he may appoint, shall instruct, catechise and examine such children as he may deem advisable in the principles of their religion, and shall commence and close such instruction with such prayers from the Liturgy as he may select. It is provided that all such Instruction shall be exempt from examination of the Inspector, unless authorized by the Bishop. The Bill directs that such religious instruction shall always be given, in a room apart from those scholars, whose parents desire that they should not be present at such religious instruction ; and the time for such teaching, not exceeding one hour in one day, nor three hours in a week, shall be, at the opening or closing of the school.

To prevent the abuse of the exemption, so accorded to the children whose parents shall desire them not to be present at such religious instruction, beyond the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, it is made an offence, liable to a penalty, for any person to compel the presence, or to molest or punish a child for his absence at such periods ; and further, the act of giving religious instruction to such child, except the reading and teaching the Holy Scriptures, is made equally penal. There is a clause authorizing the absence of the children of Dissenters from school, in order to receive instruction from their ministers. The permission may be proper enough ; but for the State to regulate in any way the religious instruction of Dissenters must be objectionable to all parties.

The children are to attend any Sunday school and place of worship which their parents may desire ; and the master is ordered to open his school on Sunday, Christmas-day and Good Friday, to give religious instruction to the members of the Church of England, according to the doctrines and principles thereof, to any child or young person whose parents may wish, or who may desire such instruction.

The opening the school for an hour and a half on an evening three days a week is also provided for.

Such are the provisions of this Bill. It does not provide any endowment for Dissenters' schools ; and for this obvious reason : such schools could not be public schools, since dissent in every respect has a private and restrictive character.

These schools claim the public support, because open to all, without exclusion to any from any part of the instruction given ; and the State would indeed act most absurdly, most unconstitutionally, and in self-stultification, if, recognizing the duty of providing for *Religious* Instruction, it adopted any other religion than Christianity, or any christian teaching, not in accordance with that of the national Church ;

however it may, in a just respect for the rights of scrupulous minds, carefully guard all its measures, from giving any occasion of offence. Were the State to set itself as a judge of what amount of teaching, short of that which the Church herself recognizes, would, after a process of clipping, paring and emasculation, yet be the Christian religion, this would be nothing less nor more than for it to assume the office of teacher herself, and in no ambiguous style to set up a new phase of doctrine. This might well be deemed an unauthorized assumption. It would certainly tend to lay it open to the reprobatory attack of a warm opponent of this measure,* who tells us, "whether the magistrate prescribes a course, or tolerates a deviation, he assumes the place of God." And yet Dissenters, in their inconsistency, would lead us into something of the kind.

Thus we see, that this Bill takes care that these poor children shall be educated. It stimulates voluntary exertion to this end, and the public is charged with the deficiency.

III.

We are now to consider the objections which have been raised to the Bill, and how far the amendments have obviated them.

They may be divided into practical and theoretical; and for the practical ones, they may be classed under the seven following heads. We will append to each objection its reply.

1st. It is objected, that no case has been shown of any overwhelming necessity for such a measure; and that the late disturbances, which have awakened our attention to its necessity, were in truth but a frolic; as Mr. Baines describes them, "the most harmless movement on record; an experiment, at the folly of which the workmen laughed as soon as it was over";—that Lord Ashley's representations were false and fraudulent;—"that there never was anything more monstrous, in the most studied and envenomed slander, than the *impression* produced concerning the manufacturing districts, by this thrice-stilled selection of evil †";—and lastly, that *any thing* tending to supersede the voluntary system, and to discourage the efforts of Sunday-school teachers would be a national calamity.

To the first of these objections no reply shall be accorded. Let it remain to confront its authors when the time for a more sober mind shall have arrived. As to the latter, it need only

* Dr. Cox.

† Baines' Letter to Parents of Sunday Scholars.

The objections we have taken care always to state in the words, as we have found them scattered throughout protests and publications giving a fair expression to the voice of Dissenters in this movement.

be said that if there was any thing in the original Clauses of the Bill, (which appear in this respect to have received a misconstruction) which would have interfered with Sunday schools, the amendments have put an end to all question hereon. Neither they, nor any other schools can now justly complain against this Bill, unless, with Mr. Evans, (the sentiments of whose Letter have met a universal approbation,) they should make it a grave cause of grievance, that possibly better and more attractive schools will be afforded to the poor, and the new schools may "undersell" the old.

For myself, I will not pay the Sunday or day school teachers so poor a compliment by giving force to the objection; for I know that, true to the cause in which they are embarked, they, when they shall behold that the foundation of a breastwork has been laid, which shall at least put a limit to the wild o'erspreading seas of ignorance, will exultingly gather fresh courage, and, no longer weighed down by the hopelessness of all efforts to stem these swelling tides, excited from without, and hopefully invigorated from within, will, with a nobler ardour, put forth fresh strength, in order to more fruitful efforts in the holy cause; and they need never fear that new worlds of ignorance will ever open for their conquests.

A recent return gives us the exact details of the success of the voluntary system. Out of 1,222,137 children receiving daily instruction throughout the Kingdom, 48,470 only are found in the schools of Dissenters.

2dly. It is objected that the schools in their primary and leading character will be Church schools;—"that the ministers of the Church are to be alone recognized, and that towards Dissenters the provisions are founded, not alone on the principle of omission, but of absolute studied and vexatious exclusion;"—"that the Church having already one class of officials in the parochial clergy, the organization of another body, so closely allied with the Government, would be dangerous to liberty, since it has always been matter of solicitude with the advocates for freedom to limit rather than strengthen the prerogatives of the Crown."

Now, though it is conceded on the part of an objector in the Baptist Magazine, that the honorary post of precedence, would on all hands be the fair due of the Establishment, the plain answer to this objection is, that the State knows nothing of Dissenting ministers; but to those of the Church, a spiritual title has been acknowledged by the nation as valid: they are considered public servants for the common benefit, and the provisions of this measure are merely grounded on the fact that we have an established Church. Keeping in view this fact, what has the Bill not done, which could be done without altering the constitution of the country? The Church obtains

no patronage; the Bill frames no exclusion. All that she requires is, that her children, her catechumens, shall not be instituted into her pale by men whom the Bishop *cannot sanction*. All else is free; and there can be no doubt but that Dissenters will obtain to the full their share of the appointments under this Bill.

3d. An objection much insisted on was, that Dissenters could only avoid being included with the rest of the scholars in the religious instructions, which might be objectionable to them by "being subjected to the scandalous stigma and unpleasantness of *stating* their objection to such instruction; and no small advantage has been taken of an obvious misinterpretation of the Bill: taking it for granted, that an expression of *the grounds* of objection, and the expression of "*objection on religious grounds*," are one and the same thing. The latter expression, which the Bill required, was that the character, motive, or ground of objection, should be religious; but it implied no necessity of stating on *what* account the animus of that objection arose. However the amendment at once ends all further cavil.

Dissenters are Dissenters on account of opinion, or they are nothing as Dissenters. It is true the Wesleyan body have so far forgotten themselves as gravely to declare their objection to the statement we have referred to, "because the claims of dissent may be defeated by the indifference of the parents of the children to their opinions;" and all along there seemed something very strange, in this most tenacious opposition, to what they conceived to be a test of the sincerity of their own opinions. If with all the hedge of protection which the amended Bill provides, and with the cold frigidity of self-exclusion which the barriers of the new arrangements afford, Dissenters still fear the influence of the Church, above all things let this be known. She desires only to open herself to willing hearts; but she will allow none to close her doors.

4th. The next objection was to the compulsory character of the provision, that no master should derive benefit from the services of these poor infants, without taking care that their schooling was provided for. The Bill, say the objectors, "interferes with the rights of labour, and the office of the parent.

The basis of the provision it will be well to explain. The law has already recognised an interest in the humane treatment of animals. Towards even the life of the embryo being in its mother's womb the law extends its protection, even though its parent should strike that life through her own flesh. The son who shall selfishly leave a parent to starve is compelled, if necessary, to perform the dictates of humanity; other more delicate duties, when necessity arises, the law enforces. The station of the highest noble in the land does

not shield him, if he shall deny his child a parent's duty, from being subject by a suitable interference by the law, if that violation comes reasonably within the scope of a chargeable neglect; and shall it be said that the poor Factory children, whose state of destitution has been proved to be so awful, are intitled to no care from the State? The imposition of a penalty on a parent for wilful neglect of a paternal duty, no more implies the frequency of the exercise of the coercion of the law, than does the decree of death for murder imply, that there will be a great many murderers.

We fully admit we are treading on new ground; the interference with a parent's duty is a matter of the greatest tenderness, and that such interposition, in the case of the poor, is to the full of equal, yea, we say of more importance, than of the rich. But is this to stand entirely in the way of an imperative duty towards these helpless children? Let a previous admonition, a certain warning, intervene, and after that, who can charge the penal visitation of such a wilful neglect with impropriety?

The Sovereign is the *parens patriæ*, the superior parent, to fulfil those duties, which in this case the natural parent is unable to perform. Every civilized community has recognized these principles, and the interference of the law in this case is only the enforcement of the authority of this higher paternity.

And, did the clause under our notice recognize a tender forbearance, it could be chargeable with no unkind stringency or unfeeling harshness, which could offend even the most fastidious lover of grievances. It proceeds simply on the principle of preferring the rights of the unprotected, in preference to those much more fashionable ones, of selfishness and negligence.

Let us remember that the sole condition of this interference with master or parent, is the profit to the one, and the wages to the other, and from these alone the Bill recognises the reciprocity of obligation. You, the master, shall not appropriate the bodily exertions of this child, whom God hath subjected to helplessness for the very purpose of its education, without caring for its soul, which your employment, without education, would extinguish. You, the parent, shall not hire the person of this child away from its natural guardianship, and separate and deprive it of that tendence (which under unvitiated circumstances would, by the very order of Providence, teach it almost without instruction, and cause it to imbibe its duties through the pure channels of its own innocence), without affording it the protective aid of the institutions provided to remedy your inability. And inasmuch as a

stern necessity has unconcernedly well-nigh abandoned these infants to all the unmitigated evils of a druggery, giving precocity to their nervous energy, and palsy to their mental and spiritual nature, the humanity of a parental Government has called into existence a timely provision to supply the demands of both, and enjoins upon the parent that if he be unable to do this for his child, it is at least his duty to watch, that the provision afforded to supply that inability shall not be withheld; and upon that *neglect only* is the legitimacy of this penal enactment grounded.

Upon this simple regard to the laws of our nature and the laws of God is founded this tyrannical infraction of the rights of labour. Surely dictates of an enlightened conscience should have made the case plain to every religious mind. The gist of objection lies, not in the requisition of duties, but rather to the compulsory shape of the payment; and if any method can be devised by which, in the working of the measure, inducements can be held out, to give a voluntary character to the payments, a very great advantage will be obtained, to insure to the measure the attachment of the people.

With regard to the effect of dismissal from school. It has been very feelingly remarked, that it is bad enough for a parent to have a bad child, without preventing him from setting that child to work. The effect of dismissal, and the power of dismissal, are two different things, and there seems no sufficient reason for accompanying the dismissal with the liberty to idleness.

5th. Next, it was objected that the measure was unconstitutional, as to imposing taxation without representation.

The amendment giving the choice of one Trustee to the subscribers, and four to the rate-payers, is at once a large and liberal concession. It may be remarked, that though the reciprocal right of representation fully extends to the check, control, appropriation and distribution of the tax imposed, it has no claim in that character, to the spiritual direction and moral management of persons.

Analogous to the last objection is another; viz. that "the Bill taxes Dissenters for instruction from which they dissent."

Our reply is, that the expense is laid on the public, because the schools are public and general—open to all—for the good of all. The public suffers from the vices and irregularities of an irreligious population; for instance, at the last Gloucester assizes, of 110 prisoners, 100 could neither read nor write. This principle of exacting unonerous requirements of individuals for the good of all, is that upon which this measure is brought forward; and if the principle is not good, the basis, upon which rests the right of all government to power

over its members, is at an end. The Bill, indeed, apart from the humanity and benevolence of its object, may be considered, as a new requisition of mutual and salutary suretyship for the future good behaviour of the now infant community. It is a suretyship into which other portions of the community have already voluntarily entered.

If it be wrong, by this measure, to tax any of a dissentient minority, in what a twentyfold proportion must that measure be additionally wrong, which, by making grants to all denominations, would afflict the conscience of every member of the community with a sanction to such multiplicit error? And supposing that any such measure could possibly be carried out, what would Dissenters say to their portion of the grant? We can well anticipate how gladly they would come into the present arrangement, when they should see the Church carrying away perhaps ten times as much as themselves.

6th. The next class of objections are to the details; and in these respects the amendments have met most of them. Thus:—

The power of the clerical Trustee has been cut down, and all the influence which, by the mode of election by justices, the Church might have been supposed to have secured to itself, is transferred to popular opinion and dissent; so that it may almost be doubted, whether the members of the Church, have a protection for their religious opinion against violation by dissent.

His (the clerical Trustee's) power, in the dismissal of children, is no longer open to objection; three trustees must concur. The hour is no longer in his selection. The defective form of the declaration of objection has been perfectly remedied. The qualification of trustees is extended to the fullest limit. Trustees are now made elective. The assistant-masterships are laid open to dissenters. The rate-payers are admitted to control. Sunday-schools are not interfered with, and all day-schools are made capable for the purposes of this Act.

7th. The last class of objections are of a personal character;—that the Bill disqualified schools—disqualified masters—disqualified trustees—and disqualified children.

The amendments have happily reduced this catalogue, and the grievances which now remain are just these: That Dissenters have not the use of the school class-room for teaching their tenets, and that those of their body will, in all probability, be excluded from the office of teaching the Church Catechism.

What, in their sum total, do all these objections amount to? Is there any value or weight in them? Are they

reasonable? Are they fairly objections at all to the measure? Are they at all adequate to account for the hostility to the Bill, which no concession seems able to pacify? And with regard to the concessions which have been made, great and liberal though they are admitted to be, Lord John Russell with great candour made this well-merited avowal:

“I think that the amendments which the Right Honourable Baronet has proposed, must be looked upon rather as intended to remedy the defects, and to carry into effect the original intent of the measure, than as a departure from its principle. I concede that.”

Negatively, indeed, the entire of these objections have nothing in them sufficient to outweigh the measure; when placed in the scale and estimated at their due weight, their power is as nothing. But altering the mode of stating the equation, give them a positive and forcible position, and square them inversely, (that is in the ratio of their paucity), with the amount of activity displayed, then certainly they do realize a good deal of magnitude. And expressed thus, according to a simple form, they all resolve themselves into the *complaint*, that dissenting teaching is not recognized as a faithful edition of Christian institute. How indeed could it?

Why Dissenters should complain that those baptized into the national faith should receive suitable instruction, no good ground has been stated; and if there are dainty ones, who relish not the food provided for the great family, that surely is no reason to deprive the children of their bread; the rest are not compelled to eat it. Such objections avail only against the objectors.

IV.

Perceiving, no doubt, how unworthy, weak and untenable were all these objections, as fatal to the principle and scope of the measure, and that the whole sum and substance of them, resolves itself into a principle which must detract much from their sterlingworth; viz. the pure principle of self; having no doubt a consciousness how sorely they put to the blush the name of Christianity and patriotism, in which they are evoked, the movement at once took an early turn, and “no modification” was universally proclaimed; and accordingly the petitions both before and since the amendments pray that the Bill be rejected.

We have dwelt tediously, and perhaps needlessly, on various previous objections; they are only necessary and come in as make-weights; the master objection we have now to handle, which is of the theoretical character.

The minds who have weighed and canvassed this measure in all its bearings, perceived at once to what extent the admission of the duty of the State to provide religious education leads; and finding that at this point the whole stress of the question lies, to this, therefore, all their force has been directed; and to maintain this position every sacrifice has been cheerfully made.

A pure secular education, unaccompanied with religion, is found to be, if not positively injurious, yet of such a neutral value, in the moral improvement of the people, that it now numbers few supporters. A moral education without religion, would be going back to Heathenism; nothing therefore remains but a religious education, whose surpassing advantage and superiority all admit; and if a religious, and therefore a Christian, education we are to have, there are but two ways of dealing with this subject;—either to adopt the principles of this measure, which gives to the Dissenter every thing he requires, short of patronage by the State of his tenets,—a measure which, if duly considered, is, in fact, an English edition of the Irish scheme, altered only with reference to the peculiarities of the different countries;—or, in the other alternative, to alter the constitution of the country, denationalize the Church, and oblige the State to sanction an infinite number of differences in religion, and to involve itself in the difficulties of determining what amount of the adoption of the Christian tenets, shall constitute a claim for any body professing Christianity, to the patronage of the State. This latter alternative is out of the question. Therefore, finding that the brunt of the battle lay in the admission of the first principle, thither they have drawn the whole force of their array, and prepared to abide the result at all hazards; and this hazard is the establishment of the *principle* that religion is no *national concern*.

“In the name of conscience and its righteous and inviolable liberty,” say Dissenters, “for the State to promulgate any plan of religious instruction is an intolerable tyranny;” and the Eclectic Review, speaking *ex cathedrâ*, declares it is a fearful alternative to which we are left by the negative position, (viz. the non-interference of the State with education); “yet by that negative position we are prepared to abide;” and this negative position reaches fully, to the point of the State withholding all education; for it candidly admits, “that society is far more deeply interested in the religious than the secular instruction of the young; yet who amongst us would admit of the propriety of enforcing by a penalty the communication of Scripture history and doctrine?” (Note, however, that the Bill has no kind of penalty or force on the child, to whom the communication is made, and has not the slightest coercive taint of interference over minds or opinions, so far as Christians are concerned.) Again, the same author says, “Government has as little to do with the religious training of children as with adults.”

Mr. Hinton argues, "Because the State enforces one of my religious duties, I cannot object to his entry to enforce the rest." Again, says the Eclectic, quoting the latter gentleman, "I may be a Jew, an infidel, a Mahomedan, a deist, an atheist; I believe Christianity to consist of a mass of fictions, taken advantage of by artful priests; and yet the Government requires me to have the hateful notions wrought into the mind of my child, and subjects me to penalties for refusal." Again we are majestically told by this the mouth-piece of the objectors, that "**THE ARGUMENT IS GROUNDED UPON THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION BEING TRUE;**"—that "*the argument resolves itself into this, either that it is EQUALLY! right for a government to insist on the children being made Protestants at one time, Papists at another, and Pagans at another, or else it is wrong to meddle with religious education at all.*"

Such are the weapons, founded and wrought out, in the armory of the belligerents, by the *élite* amongst them; accordingly, their chosen champions have wielded them all without scruple. We find them condensed, and embodied into the hosts of petitions, protests, and proclamations which they have preferred and published. These arguments, as our opponents themselves profess, exhibit the only ground on which the *new principles*, which they would *establish* amongst us, can find any rest or support. Always let it be remembered, that these are attempts to annul the obligation of our youth merely to hear and attend, (observe, not to profess or believe), the Christian instruction imparted.

Astounding in their character as such arguments are,—and they go nothing short of this, to reduce the obligation of men towards God, to be one only having an individual force, and that, associatively, they owe no obligation to recognize any, the slightest, respect or regard towards Him—whose name ever be blessed!—astounding as are these sweeping objections to the general inculcation of the christian religion, unaccompanied by the peculiarities of its professors, we need not be very fearful to approach them, nor in the encounter need we apprehend any jeopardy for the invaluable right of conscience, or the forfeiture of the full enjoyment of our birth-right of civil and religious liberty. If, indeed, Sir James Graham be not some new Mahomet, with his sword and Koran, these vociferations must surely proceed from the offspring of some new race of Titans, prepared to storm heaven itself! However, let us hasten our reply.

When a nation has given up its savage customs, and wild roving habits, and betakes itself to agricultural pursuits, all recognize and submit to beneficial obligations which are universal, restrictive of fraud and violence, and which, according to their more advanced state, each man's security demands. Thus, with ourselves, the introduction of the law

of frankpledge by our Alfred, (an institution which, though now unhappily, perhaps, nearly obsolete in practice, is yet in its principles the very essence of the English social system), by which every man was bound to find sureties that he would recognize the duties and obligations of the law, may furnish us with a remarkable and analogous instance of a state adoption—of an institution suitably recognizing the obligation of duties, conformable to a higher advance in civilization. And we are here reminded by the notice of this great groundwork of English liberty, that we derive our superiority to other nations in freedom, only because we better understand and recognize its obligations.

Now, the ligatory acknowledgment of these duties, would have been unjust, unless the nation had previously recognized and adopted them. So, had the nation never adopted Christianity, it might have been said to be a violation of liberty to recognize any obligation to hear its teaching.

Again, when from a pastoral, a change has been made to a husbandry, application of the land, as in times when inclosures were not in use, it was no violation of liberty to say that a man must adapt himself to the new circumstances, and that the rules at least of his husbandry life must be those adopted by the community. He must reap, sow, crop, and turn on according to the village code. Another illustration occurs. In several of the American states, a man must learn either the exercise required to fit himself for the duties of a fireman, or of an armed defender of his country.

Thus we see, according to the character and urgencies of society, every man claiming to belong to that society, must take care to fit and qualify himself, duly to conform to and answer them. To say that Government has nothing more to do than to fight the country's battles, and to keep the peace, (as we have lately heard), argues a hopeless state of fatuity in political knowledge.

The fact is, that the law enforces the whole decalogue; and, besides this, it enforces the peculiar christian duties: it requires that men should each be the husband of one wife; that they should not walk after the manner of the gentiles in rioting, drunkenness, uncleanness, lasciviousness; and that they should pity and relieve the poor and distressed, fear God and honour the King.

Now, all this it does upon the assumption that the people we see about the streets are really creatures whom God made after his own image, and that they are as little atheists as the mere similitudes of men. It regards it to be no assumption

of the whole argument (according to the new doctrinaires), to judge that by the very breath which cometh out of their nostrils, they are liegemen of the Almighty.

Now, our opponents go so far as to assert, that because certain persons may be atheists, society is to deal with all the rest of the community as if they were so, and has no right to act upon the presumption of a general belief in God.

But society *has*, amongst us, recognized Christianity, and adopted its laws and belief; therefore it is no violation of liberty, if it requires from you pledges to perform its duties by submitting to instruction.

The State would receive a somewhat alarming warning, if the same principles which established the measures of relief to Dissenters from disabilities and tests, should interfere to forbid the inculcation of religion. Such measures would indeed have been retrograde movements, instead of advances in the principles of liberty (which, under another name, may, with true propriety, be termed the rights of charity), if that advance should include, in its full development, such doctrines as men have been base enough to urge in its sacred name.

This measure not only takes for granted that the Bible is the word of God, and that the Christian religion as taught by the Church is true, but it takes for granted, that the State (lest the country should again lapse into total or partial infidelity) is bound by a duty to God, as well as to itself, to provide all the requisite means for preventing that calamity. It proceeds upon no speculative thirst to proselyte, but in remedy of an admitted evil.

It does take for granted, that towards those from whom it requires the duties of good citizens, it owes the duty, by instruction, to fit them to become so; and further, knowing that "evil communications corrupt good manners," it does say to the atheist and depraved, that a man shall not deny his child christian instruction.

And, moreover, notwithstanding a great deal of idle vapour, the State feels itself strong enough in its own honesty to avow, that seeing our manufacturing system has so stunted and enfeebled the moral growth of those who are engaged in its wearisome round of mechanical employment, as almost to have deprived some amongst them of a hale spirit of moral vigour, It will not shrink, from a humane though arduous and unpopular endeavour to mend an evil so enormous; relying with confidence that its true motive for the people's good will vindicate itself to the hearts of all parents whose children It desires by this measure to instruct.

V.

Having given our impartial attention to the objections urged against this or any measure of religious instruction, it is now our duty, from apologists to become Accusers ;—and we say : What mean you in assuming on behalf of your countrymen, on whose part these efforts are professedly made, that they are favourers of atheism, or contemners of Christianity ? And for yourselves, how can you, after throwing the proof of both upon your opponents, stand in this quarrel in the character of Christian Dissenters ? Fully indeed, in this sad illustration, do all the force and aptitude of our Lord's words come to light, “ He that is not for me is against me.”

Behold, oh Christians ! Hosannahs have already ascended from the countless voices of these little ones ; but your outcry hath already broken the swelling volume of joyful thanksgiving, and now in the stillness of that hush—in the suppressed breathing of that calm—the ground and the very stones open their mouths in accents of rebuke.

“ Wherefore are you so grievous ?—Why do ye always so resist ?—Why are ye bound together in your hearts as one man ?—What seek ye ?—The acceptable year ye do defer.—How shall the gospel have free scope when every man would shut up the kingdom of heaven within his own citadel ?—How shall peace come upon your houses when ye salute not the message of the King of Peace ?”—Such a voice now speaketh audibly.

What a sad picture is there exhibited when men prefer “ moral instruction ” before his doctrine, which they themselves acknowledge maketh men sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ,—because the Church, whose doctrine stands unimpeached as it is unimpeachable, is made instrumental in the holy work !

Here lies the very core and centre of the matter. The State being convinced that it became its duty to take measures to support and supply christian instruction, in assuming the performance of that duty, makes at once an irrefragable avowal that it is a christian country. A christian country must have a christian Church ; it would otherwise have no Christianity. The discovery being thus made that the Church has essentially so much to do with christian education, (for all christian instruction is only a probationary course of institution into her pale), and since the Established Church alone, has the recognition of the State, it must necessarily be,

that instruction unsanctioned by her, would want the indubitable seal of its christian character. Rather than allow the instrumentality of the Church in her character as the national Church, one and all the bodies of Dissenters throughout the Kingdom seem with one voice to have declared that they will throw overboard Christianity itself, and repudiate every plan of national education.

“Once concede,” says the Reverend Mr. M’Karrow, at a meeting at Liverpool, “the right of giving religious instruction, and you concede the right of giving what they deem best; and then you can have no right to complain of their giving the Liturgy and Catechism.” So, therefore, they will not concede any religious instruction whatever.

Hence the resolutions putting Christianity and any *other religion* on an equal footing; hence the attempt to establish the principle that Christianity is only an individual concern; hence this bold attempt to unchristianize the country: and so, in the train of such principles a little further developed, it would follow that a number of vociferous universalists, who delight to hasten the day for the emancipation of men from every religious obligation, might frighten the House of Commons, in the name of civil and religious liberty, that it is the height of intolerance to command the observance of the Sabbath.

Obviate every objection, remove every unpalatable incident to the plan—all is in vain; they have fully avowed that any national plan of education is incompatible with their principles.

And these principles are no less than that there shall be no body *authorized* to have opinions to come across their path to dissent from. Surely no person, much less a conscientious person—and undoubtedly dissent is conscientious,—is ashamed of his opinions. He may, it is true, dislike, when he comes into association with others, to avow or make prominent any difference of sentiment; and it would be unkind in others to make it apparent. But for Dissenters to protest that it is a “stigma” cast upon them, that they should be exposed to profess their differences when a case of difference arises, is something new, and indicates some of those enlarged liberties which they are so anxious to secure, by causing the withdrawal of this Bill.

Who must profess to differ? The Dissenter is the differing party; yet, say they, the Church is only to hold in silence any opinions which are at variance with a Dissenter’s, when they come into company. Dissenters, it is true, have gone out of the ranks of the Church; but she must come up into even face with them. Religious society is to represent a uniformity

with neither light nor shade—a universal religious *sans culotism*, because it is “irksome, disagreeable and invidious” for Dissenters to acknowledge their own opinions. If these new principles of irreligious intolerance do not alarm all good men, let them wait the development of this wide-spread resolution. Observe, again, the character of this movement; because Dissenters have the will to proselyte and instruct, all the people are *therefore* to wait uninstructed till the millennium of Dissent. But so disingenuous is their recommendation, to depend upon the overpowering strength of the voluntary system, that whilst all its triumphs are boastingly enlarged upon, they themselves cry out, in the utmost alarm, that its offspring cannot stand without the risk of annihilation, in any competition with the superior character of those institutions which shall result from this scheme.

Thus, because voluntary exertions come in aid of the parent, the parent’s duty must be neglected. Because a few draw water for themselves, therefore the regular supply of the household shall be stopped, and the people perish; because the Church has been apathetic, therefore, say they, according to the fable, now is the time to bind her for ever, for fear she should again ever exercise her strength. Mark! though every exertion of Dissent has been to some extent aggressive and hostile towards the Church, any incitement to duty that would “stir up her strife, would be a dreadful calamity.”

Lord Duncan, at a Bristol meeting, declares, “that the Bill seeks to deprive Dissenters of their right of being foremost in combating and opposing ignorance, prejudice and error.” And as if to cancel the debt of gratitude due to their exertions, it is made a matter of serious grievance, an invasion of the right of their teachers, first, that the children of the Church should need and require instruction in the faith into which they have been baptized; and, secondly, that by this measure they will be “deprived of their right to a maintenance in their profession,” by a competition with better and more serviceable instructions. Perhaps this monopoly of all instruction, this vested interest in the stock in trade of the souls of all the poor Factory children, may have escaped recognition at home. It answers fully to all the other parts of the opposition.

But whence springs all this hostility? Does it arise from any unmitigable antipathy of religious principle either to the Church doctrine or teaching, where it is fully known? No, indeed, no! All evidence contradicts this. Does it arise from her establishment? That cannot be, because each hostile body has its own little establishment, and by law, too,

each are held strictly tied to a doctrine, a government, and a patronage, by the trusts of their deeds ; so that such, at least have nothing to object. This hostility is just such as those can fully understand who know their own hearts ; and, in a righteous cause, it is to be feared only as all human hostility ought—by true and loyal hearts.

Thus, in their broadest characters, are the principles which have aroused this opposition presented to us ; which, though they might give alarm to the Church, even for its safety, yet were they the offspring of christian feeling, if they had for their basis the protection of any christian right, of any christian sociality, of any christian charity, it would be suicidal in the State, it would be treason in the Church, to contend with them. Were they principles which had any connexion with an honest profession of dissent, or the support or propagation of those fruits which have furnished honourable tests to its sincerity, and which have aroused the Church herself to jealousy, all respect, all concession, would be their due ; but when, in their unveiled appearance, they stand confessed as the advocates for selfish arrogance, for monopolizing and aggressive claims upon the rights of society, of domineering dictation, of petulant pride, of heartless hinderance of all good which administers not to vain personal adulation ; when they are based solely upon personal and pecuniary regards, claiming for them paramount consideration, above every humane sympathy, every philanthropic tenderness, every christian charity ; when, in the pride of their unbending haughtiness, they lay prostrate with a complaisant satisfaction our country's Christianity,—yea, our national acknowledgment of the Almighty himself,—shall any unworthy fear make us backward, or hesitate to confront, disown, and oppose them ? Come, thou most grateful contest !—come, thou true spirit of charity !—come, thou clean and steady-hearted inspiration, apart from all rancour and malice !—come upon us, and put to flight this Hydra. Whence could spring forth such a growth ? Whence could a crop so rank and ungenial spring forth ?

Ah ! how dangerous, how fatal, are those incipient principles which tend to carry into the sanctuary the human will, bending before nothing but itself. Respect may prove itself less than worship : the laying aside the tables of the law may bring in a fearful evil.

Let those who hesitate to bend the knee before God—those who disown the propriety of a humble confession of all as “miserable sinners”—those who scoff at a dutiful use and repetition of the prayer of our Lord—those who decide as all-preferable (because novel) what may be the imaginations of

the preacher, as a vehicle of devotion, to a Liturgy, which, if without credentials of inspiration, yet never fails to apply itself, in its wonderful adaptation to the currents of the highest and deepest emotions of devotional exercise, to the necessities and desires of pious worshippers;—let those who, not satisfied with the exemption from all judgment of men, lay claim to a right which sounds fearfully as including judgment upon the Supreme—let those who can raise arguments upon the principle that man can throw off his allegiance to the Almighty—let those who, to vindicate a rational consistency, think it serviceable to apologize at the use of the baptismal institution for the ordinances of the Lord—let those who ridicule others for preferring simplicity in scripture interpretation, to squaring all matters up to the notional apprehensions of men;—let those who recognize religious opinion as essentially a matter at the will of man—let those who throw disparagement on the command, “Fear God, honour the King”—bethink within themselves, whether a serious consideration of such matters, and the sight which has been exhibited, in the simultaneous rejection of any and every good which commends not itself by self-exaltation, creates unfairly, a settled conviction that there is detected to be inherent in the genius of Dissent, notwithstanding all the good it enjoys, an element which bows before no throne.

Conscientiousness cannot but be plainly recognized in Dissent. But an honest discernment distinguishes between a pious tenderness of conscience, and that conscientiousness of tenderness in those fibres of a root which, while adhering to the most intimate principles of self-love, feels them strained more and more powerfully, at each influence which tends to bend either the head or the heart. However this may be, let no axe of man attempt to sever these roots. If axe they need, an effectual provision for cutting them asunder hath been made. Gentleness and tenderness are the only weapons authorized for man’s use; as little are we encouraged to flatter and patronize a misjudging adhesion to errors which we suppose in others, as we are strongly forbidden to despise or treat such scornfully.

Surely it can be the duty neither of the State nor the Church to turn slightly or disdainfully from christian excellence; and methinks that though she should deem that they too hastily, and with a zeal for God guided too narrowly, with an aspect towards the light appearing to shine around their own paths, went out from her, and though the same spirit of repulsion with which each separated has taken from good hearts a generous mind towards her; yet a noble self-

compunction for much evil in her former too great harshness, and for the little attractive example of her own manners, in love for her Master, and in some gratitude and esteem to those who, in those parts of christian duty in which she hath been wanting, have set before her a powerfully exciting and awakening example, should avail to induce her humbly to exercise an affectionate and disinterested interest in favour of such as have gone away from her household, and if she has yet a claim upon them to draw them to a better fellowship, she has towards herself, one greater for her own forbearance; so that without shame it may be to her, powerfully to call upon these her wayward children, by the ties of duty, to reclaim their communion. And then methinks the spirits of their forefathers, beholding the ugly rent they have made in their Lord's vesture, shall weep, sorrowfully bemoaning themselves that they had discovered no better way of enlarging His kingdom, than by erecting each a new citadel to attack it, and by each retiring from the sphere of His more peculiar invigoration. For who that hath eyes to see, and sees not, even amidst these times of hostilities, that the days are coming when the best hearts, even amongst her enemies, will hunger and pant for the meat and rest which is to be found within her borders?

For ourselves, let us fully believe that our Lord is with His Church. Let us take no alarm for this ark of our land, if her sons remain but faithful to the sacred trust; let us pay her a more dutiful obedience; let us endeavour to walk more closely in the steps of a christian life; let us make ourselves ready to answer all her calls, all her needs.

And under present circumstances, does it not become us, to gird up ourselves for our duties, and *brave without fear* the lashing violence of their movements? And whilst with charity we preserve both a christian feeling and christian bearing towards its authors, let us never forget what we owe to our dear Mother, in every urgency; and dear, most dear, is she to us all!



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A calm inquiry into all the objections
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nature, tendency, and object of the
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